

EPA releases final rule on curbing methane emissions

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The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued three final rules earlier this month to reduce emissions of methane, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and other air pollutants from new and modified existing oil and gas production sources. A vital component of the Obama Administration's Climate Action Plan is to cut methane emissions from the oil and gas industry by 40-45 percent by 2025; these three rules hope to help accomplish this goal.

The rules include provisions requiring a fixed schedule for monitoring leaks at well sites, the option to use innovative technologies to monitor leaks, and phased-in requirements to use new "green completion" technologies for capturing emissions from hydraulically fractured wells.

Proponents of the rule include many environmental groups, who praise the EPA and the Administration for their efforts to reduce methane, a greenhouse gas 25 times more potent than carbon dioxide. However, congressional Republicans who opposed the rule claim that it ignores the progress industry has already made in making their own methane reduction rules. As such, Republicans within the House Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Interior and Environment have included a provision in their fiscal year 2017 appropriations bill prohibiting the use of congressional funds to implement these new methane requirements. If passed, the bill would seriously undermine the Administration's Climate Action Plan.

The bill still needs to be taken up and accepted by the full Committee before it can reach the House floor for a vote. The Senate has not yet released their version of bill.

Sources: E&E News, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), House Committee on Appropriations, the White House
